

Smarter than the average horse - Bucks County Courier Times (Levittown, PA) - February 6, 2005 - page 1C

February 6, 2005 | Bucks County Courier Times (Levittown, PA) | JAMES MCGINNIS COURIER TIMES | Page 1C

He lost the Triple Crown, but Philadelphia Park-trained **Smarty Jones**, who's now in Kentucky, is still enormously popular.

With more than 1 million pieces of fan mail, several dozen marriage proposals and an animated feature film in discussion, **Smarty Jones** shows no signs of diminishing popularity post-retirement.

Since his arrival at T hree Chimneys Farm in Kentucky, the stud farm reports more than 5,000 visitors have booked free tours.

Smarty gets hundreds of letters sent to T hree Chimneys each month. Smarty gets e-mails. Smarty's Web site and photo album at www.T hreeChimneys.com gets more than 20,000 hits per day, according to personnel at the farm.

Farmhands said the attention has led the farm to hire a full-time tour guide/mail handler.

"T his is not Smarty Land," said Margaret Layton, communications director for the farm where Smarty earns a \$100,000 stud fee. "We are an operating stud farm and that is our primary business."

Scheduled for release to area bookstores next month, the new book - "Dear Smarty" - chronicles some of the estimated 1 million letters to the chestnut thoroughbred.

"Dear Smarty, You are pretty smart. Give your owners my prayers," writes fifth-grader Jada Harley of Our Lady of Grace Elementary School in Penndel.

Jada, who lives in Lower Makefield, is among three kids from Lower Bucks featured in the book. Joey Ward of Afton Elementary in Lower Makefield and Emily Yonce of Grey Nun Academy in Yardley also had their letters published.

Jada and her mother, Agnes Harley, were planning a trip to Kentucky to visit her favorite pen pal. She also has a Smarty CD and the home is filled with Smarty memorabilia, autographed dolls and newspaper clippings from Smarty's victories at the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness last year.

Smarty lost the Belmont Stakes, missing his chance to capture horse racing's T riple Crown. From there, he should have run for president, Jada said.

During last year's presidential election, she gave her mom a Smarty ballot box to cast votes for the horse. "Many people in my office said they'd rather vote for the horse than the other two candidates," Agnes Harley said.

Along with President Bush and Democratic challenger John Kerry, Smarty was named one of the "most influential people of 2004" by Time magazine and one of last year's most inspirational figures by Beliefnet.com.

The author of "Dear Smarty," Billy Valentine, said he isn't surprised by any of it.

Sifting through more than a million letters sent to the horse, Valentine said the overwhelming majority of them address Smarty as though he were a person instead of a horse.

Many letters came from seniors living in nursing homes. "Some of them talked about other horses they remembered over their lifetime. They spoke of events in their lifetime and of the excitement in their nursing homes [about Smarty]," Valentine said.

The horse received several dozen marriage proposals from children as well as adults, he added.

Many people wrote to hit up the horse for some cash.

"One kid wrote, 'Dear Smarty, you've won a lot of money so far. Can I have some?' " Valentine remembered. "So many people wrote to him as though they were writing to a pen pal or a cousin."

One of the most amazing things to Valentine was that the family of his (now ex-) trainer, John Servis, and the Chapmans, who are part owners of the horse, were responding to many of these letters even as they prepared for the Belmont in June.

"These were not simply postcards. They were handwritten notes," Valentine said.

Servis' wife, Sherry, said at least 400,000 letters to Smarty arrived at the family's home. "We had boxes and boxes of letters. We're still getting letters now."

Valentine said he's negotiating with a number of "major studio houses to get the ball rolling [on an animated film].

"We should have something to announce sometime in the summer," he said "The idea is to give this horse that voice and that personality that everyone seems to think he already has."

"Dear Smarty" should be available in most bookstores within about a month, Valentine said. Published by Braveheart Press, the book is also available at Barnes & Noble.com.

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Smarty:

To contact Smarty

Letters should be sent to **Smarty Jones**, Three Chimneys Farm, P.O. Box 114, Midway, KY 40347.
Or e-mail him at farm@threechimneys.com.

Dear Smarty, you're the greatest

CITATION (AGLC STYLE)

JAMES MCGINNIS; COURIER TIMES, 'Smarter than the average horse', *Bucks County Courier Times* (online), 6 Feb 2005 1C <<https://infoweb-newsbank-com.libproxy.temple.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/10828E0FC4151DB5>>

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